

# Non-Compliance Sanction Policy

December 2006

## *Governor Gregoire's WorkFirst Directive*

- *Renewed sense of mission.*
- *Reform the program to achieve better success for parents.*
- *WorkFirst must improve and provide supports to help parents find jobs and keep jobs, including child care.*
- *Parents must participate in the program or lose support.*

## *Sanction Caseload*

*In September 2006, 2,681 cases were in sanction. This is 8.4% of TANF cases with an adult who is required to participate.*

### *Of these sanctioned cases:*

- *1,412 cases were in the first or second month of sanction (4.4% of adult TANF cases)*
- *1,269 cases had been in sanction for three or more months (4.0% of adult TANF cases)*

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For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit  
[www.workfirst.wa.gov](http://www.workfirst.wa.gov)

## **What is a WorkFirst Sanction?**

A WorkFirst sanction is a penalty that applies when a person is able but unwilling to participate in required WorkFirst activities. When a person refuses to participate, the family's grant is reduced by 40% or the person's share, whichever is greater.

To stop the penalties the person must do her or his required WorkFirst activities for four weeks in a row.

## **What is the Non-Compliance Sanction Policy?**

The non-compliance sanction policy began on September 1, 2006. The ultimate goal of the policy change is to re-engage WorkFirst families and encourage them to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the program.

The non-compliance sanction policy ends cash assistance for parents who refuse to participate for six months in a row. An independent state-level review panel makes the final decision after conducting a thorough case review to ensure the original sanction was appropriate and the department made attempts to re-engage the parent in the program.

## **What Safeguards Are in Place?**

The non-compliance sanction policy contains many safeguards to ensure the department follows a consistent and transparent process from the time a person enters sanction:

- Sanction review criteria to make certain sanctions are placed only on parents who refuse to act responsibly with the self-sufficiency plan they agreed to.
- Supervisory review and approval of sanction decisions.
- Case staffings, with others who are working with the family to address barriers to compliance and encourage participation.
- Comprehensive evaluations to identify strengths and create a plan for self-sufficiency.
- Continued outreach and support to help parents participate, end their sanction and restore their full cash benefits.

Before a case is closed, the department conducts a child safety review to discuss the parent's plans to care for and support her or his children. The department keeps other supports in place, like medical and food assistance.

## **What if the Family Reapplies?**

Families can reapply at any time. Families who reapply within six months, however, must participate for four weeks in a row before they receive cash. Benefits are then restored back to the date the family was otherwise eligible.

If someone in the family is sanctioned again, the sanction review panel may close the case after refusal to participate for 3 months in a row.